

AN  
EPISTLE

FROM THE  
Meeting for Sufferings,

By their Order, the 17th of the Second Month,  
And 1st of the Third Month, 1696.

*To such Friends in England and Wales, or elsewhere, as are or may be concerned in the Favour granted by the Government for the Ease of Friends, from the great Oppression of Oaths.*

Dear Friends,

THE Lord our God, that Rules in the Kingdoms of Men, having of late Years inclined the Hearts of many in the Government unto a Tenderneſs towards Friends in ſome meaſure; there hath alſo fallen on ſome Friends a Concern of Mind to improve that Tenderneſs, which was in the King and ſome of the Rulers to the moſt eaſe to Suffering Friends that could then be obtained;

Of which Friends have generally now for ſeveral Years had the Benefit by Law, in their Open, Free and Unmoſtled Exerciſe in the Worſhip of God; to his great Honour, to Friends great Comfort, and to the farther Spreading of the Truth in this Nation: As alſo to the Cruſhing the Cruel and Ungodly Informers, and other Perſecutors:

For which great Mercy, many Sincere-hearted Ones have in Humility of Soul been thankful to God, and have been very Free in their Minds publickly to acknowledge it, to the severall Governments, by whom this Ease hath been Granted and Confirmed.

And although the aforesaid Ease did not come forth with that Clearness, in all Points, that Friends did desire, yet it hath much answered the good Ends above-mentioned. So that Friends have been since at times incouraged to endeavour for farther Ease in divers Cases; and of late to obtain (we hope) some stop to the great Sufferings many have been under by Imprisonments, Sequestrations, and otherwise; for refusing to Swear, in obedience to Christ's Command, &c.

In which Labour and Endeavour the Presence of the Lord hath been witnessed, and his Power felt to work on Friends behalf.

And it being now past into a Law, and Friends thereby admitted (through this Nation) to have their Solemn Declaration *in the Presence of Almighty God, the Witness of the Truth of what [we] say*, accepted instead of an Oath in all Cases, except serving in Juries, being Evidence in Criminal Causes, and bearing Offices of Profit in the Government.

There now remains a few things in our Minds, to signify to all Friends that may be concerned in this matter.

And first, we intreat that whoever of you, that are called, or have occasion to make or use the said Solemn Declaration, or subscribe the Promise of Fidelity to the Government, may be truly watchful to be preserved in a weighty serious Frame of Spirit, as much as in you lies, to reach the Witness of God in all that hear you: For your keeping strictly to the very Truth of what you say or declare, and speaking in the true Fear and Dread of the Lord, will much tend to convince those of the World, who are serious, that they have from you fully as great Certainty of Truth as from those that Swear.

And as hereunto, our Christian Profession and Duty towards God doth oblige us, to the highest degree of Care,  
in

in Testifying the Truth, so also is the Punishment on any that shall falsify, as great, both from God; and from Men; for the Punishment from God is, for Liars to be cast into the Lake, *Rev.* 21. 8, 27. from Men 'tis the same Punishment that by Law is appointed to Perjured Persons.

It seems also needful to us, to acquaint you, that it was the Sense of this Meeting, that somewhat might be done to satisfie all, that may be in doubt; or that may have had it in their Minds, as Matter of Question; what *Solemn Words* Friends might use, or admit of, and not vary from our known Principle, *Swear not at all.*

And in order thereto, to shew the Testimonies of Friends formerly express'd, many of which suffered largely on the account of Not Swearing; and we shall begin with our Dear and Worthily Remembred Friend and Elder *G. Fox*, who was moved of the Lord to write a Paper to *Oliver Cromwell*, wherein he did in the Presence of the Lord God declare, that *[he denied] the wearing or drawing of a Carnal Sword; &c.* See his *Journal*, p. 137. in Anno 1654. Afterwards being brought before the Judges of the *King's Bench*, he tendred them a Paper, in which was contained what he could say instead of the *Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy*, as followeth, *and thus*

' This I do in the Truth, and in the Presence of God,  
' declare, That King *Charles the Second* is Lawful King of  
' this Realm, and of all other his Dominions; and that he  
' was brought in, and set up King over this Realm by the  
' Power of God; and I have nothing, but Love and Good-  
' will to him and all his Subjects, and desire his Prosperity  
' and Eternal Good. And I do utterly abhor and deny the  
' Pope's Power and Supremacy, and all his Superstitions and  
' Idolatrous Inventions; and do affirm, that he hath no  
' Power to Absolve Sin: And I do abhor and detest his  
' Murthering of Princes, or other People, by Plots or Con-  
' trivances. And likewise I do deny all Plots and Contri-  
' vances, and Plotters and Contrivers against the King and  
' his Subjects, knowing them to be the Works of Darkness,  
' and the Fruits of an Evil Spirit, and against the Peace of  
' the Kingdom, and not from the Spirit of God, the Fruit  
' of which is Love. I dare not take an Oath, because it is

‘ forbidden by Christ and the Apostle; but if I break my  
 ‘ Yea or Nay, then let me suffer the same Penalty, as they  
 ‘ that break their Oaths.

G. F’s Journal, pag. 399.

George Fox.

And R. Farnsworth in Court before the Major of Banbury, when the Oath of Abjuration was tendred, *denied in the Presence of God all Popish Ways, &c. Saints Testimony*, page 2.

And R. Hubberthorne in his Discourse with King Charles the Second, when the King said, *But can you not promise as before the Lord?* (which is the substance of the Oath) R. Hubberthorne replied, *Yes, what we do affirm, we can promise before the Lord, and take him to our Witness in it.* R. H’s Works, page 269.

There being an Act passing against Friends about Anno 1662. Friends drew up Reasons, and shewed, Whereas ’tis said in the Preamble of the Bill, that our Refusing to Swear, doth much suppress the Truth, &c. Concerning which Friends Reply,

‘ This is not a true Foundation, whereupon to proceed to  
 ‘ Enact against us; for our refusing to Swear doth not suppress the Truth, because we are ready and willing to discover and advance the Truth on all occasions, lawfully  
 ‘ called thereunto, by faithful Testimony in *Yea* and *Nay*,  
 ‘ calling God to Record, or *Averting it in his Presence*, &c.

And in the 11th Reason of the said Paper, Friends say,  
 ‘ For we are willing at all times, and upon every good occasion, to affirm or deny, in *Yea* or *Yes*, in *Nay* or *No*, and  
 ‘ that as in the *Presence of God*; or *God is our Witness*, or we  
 ‘ speak the Truth in Christ, &c. We are ready to give Testimony, in all Lawful Cases, on this wise.

And in a Paper under the Hands of Edward Barroughs,  
 Francis Howgill,  
 Richard Hubberthorne.

speaking concerning Friends Innocency, ‘ who have always  
 ‘ been a peaceable People under the Government, and ready  
 ‘ to render all just Subjection thereunto, in all good things,  
 ‘ (*God is our Witness*.)

Again,

Again, ' And can own him as our Witnefs in our Testi-  
'mony in Yea and Nay.

See also *William Smith*, page 125. who soon after King  
*Charles* came back, writes thus,

' And we can truly pronounce our Allegiance to King  
'*Charles*, &c. now King of *England*; and can freely pro-  
'mise in the Presence of the Lord, who is the Searcher of all  
'Hearts, and knows we Lye not; and we can Seal it with  
'our Yea or Nay, and Sign it with our Hands.

And *Isaac Penington* saith, ' There is liberty enough left  
'to a Disciple to satisfie any Man concerning the Truth of a  
'Thing, by Confession, as much as by an Oath; for is it not  
'full as weighty under the Gospel to confess the Presence of  
'God, or that he is Witnefs, or that we speak the thing in  
'his Fear, and in the feeling of his Life and Power, as it was  
'under the Law, to Swear by his Life, by his Fear, by his  
'Power, or the like? Is not Confessing of God by a Christian;  
'of more Weight, than the Swearing by him from a Jew or  
'Heathen. See *J. Penington's* Treatise, in his Collections,  
p. 319.

The next we shall observe, is, that faithful Labourer;  
*Francis Howgill*, who suffered near Five Years Imprisonment  
at *Appleby* in *Westmorland*, even to the Death, for his Testi-  
mony against Swearing; and in his Life-time wrote largely  
in the Defence of Friends Principles in the Case of Oaths:  
See his Answer to Dr. *Smallwood* (so called) p. 677. ' In Con-  
'fession of Truth, and bearing Witnefs thereunto, as before  
'the Lord, or in his Presence, and speaking the Truth when  
'there is necessity, as when any Man's Person or Estate, or  
'any part thereof, is in danger; and this we have ever  
'owned, and do own, and have and are ready to testifie the  
'Truth before the Lord, or in his Presence, as concerning  
'any matter, which concerns the Glory of God, or the Good  
'of our Neighbour, without being pinch'd, or bound up, to  
'a certain Form of Words imposed upon us; but according  
'as necessity requires, so amply and largely as our Words  
'may give Knowledge, and Understanding, and Light in  
'any Matter which is to be desired: But this hath been de-  
'nied, and hath not been received by this unbelieving Gene-  
'ration,

‘ration, who seeks rather to establish the Traditions and  
 ‘Customs of Men, than the Evangelical Doctrine of the  
 ‘Gospel, p. 677.

Now as to the *pinching Form of Words* imposed by the un-  
 believing Generation, as aforesaid, see p. 680. *Viz.*

‘We have been set aside as Objects of Wrath, as Deluded,  
 ‘Erroneous, Factious, Seditious, Contemners of Law, Ob-  
 ‘structors of Legal Proceedings, except we would lay our  
 ‘Hand upon a Bible, and kiss it, and say, *I swear*, and by  
 ‘the Contents of the Book, and so help me God; or else Fined,  
 ‘Imprisoned for Term of Life, &c.

Again, in p. 679, 680. Reciting these Scripture Expressions,  
 ‘(The Lord is Witness) or *I speak the Truth in Christ*, or *this is*  
 ‘*Truth in the Presence of God*, or the like; none of these will  
 ‘serve; but though he and the Rulers do say they are Oaths,  
 ‘yet when at any time we have proffered willingly to declare  
 ‘the Truth in this or that particular Cause, or make as am-  
 ‘ple Confession in Demonstration for clearing any Cause in  
 ‘debate, that hath either conducted to the Glory of God, or  
 ‘the Good and Profit of any particular Man in the Nation,  
 ‘among whom we converse, and not without some Attestation  
 ‘of God, or his Wisdom, or Power and Presence, yet  
 ‘it would never be received, p. 679, 680. And if these don’t  
 reach to Civil or Temporal Affairs, what does? And yet  
 in these Cases was he free to use those Words.

Neither was his Adversary the only Opposer of Friends,  
 that affirmed these Religious Expressions, which the Apostle  
 used, were Oaths. But Samuel Fisher also, had before that  
 encountered the same Arguments, from *Hen. Dem.* and *Jer.*  
*Ives*, a contentious Baptist, who it seems then argued, *That*  
*God is my Witness, God is my Record, before God I lye not, &c.*  
*are Oaths*, S. Fisher’s Writings, p. 803, 804. and the drift of  
 their so arguing then, was to urge the Apostle swore, to  
 render Christ not to have forbidden all Swearing. But  
 S. Fisher fully clears the Apostle from their Erroneous Charge,  
 and indeed it was needful he should so do: For if it were  
 granted, as some now do, that the Apostle’s Expressions are  
 Oaths, it might greatly weaken our Testimony against  
 Swearing; for it cannot be denied but the Apostle had the  
 Mind

Mind of Christ, and if his Expressions themselves are nevertheless Oaths, their Distinction between Civil and Religious Cases won't support him.

Page 805. *S. Fisher* resumes the Argument again; and says, 'God is my Record, God is my Witness, my Conscience beareth me Witness, in the Holy Spirit, and such like; 'The Quakers (*says he*) gain-say in solemn Cases, no more 'than themselves---who have been ever willing to express 'their Renunciation of the Pope, and all Foreign Power, 'and their Fidelity to the King, by any of those strong 'Asseverations, or fervent Expressions, which *Paul* used, p. 805.

*Samuel Fisher* mentions divers odious Reflections cast upon the Apostle, and he quotes the Opposer, who affirmed as a Swearer, *That some such Swearing as was commanded under the Law, not only Christ, but the Apostle Paul does both Practise and Enjoyn*, insisting on these words, *God is my Witness, &c.* also they charge the Apostle with exacting Oaths of others, *2 Tim. 4. 1. I charge thee before God, Thess. 5. 27. I charge you by the Lord, that this Epistle be read, &c.* with a great deal more at large.

And *S. F.* ingeniously Answers, 'Some things (tho' Swearing is none of them) *Paul* did by Permission---but that *Paul* 'either Sware, or exacted Oaths upon others, I deny: And shews, in the Apostle's behalf, and in the behalf of our Testimony, that the Apostle did not Swear; and that he did not swear *Timothy* to Preach the Word; and that *Timothy* did not swear to him, that he would Preach the Word; and that he did not swear the *Thessalonians* to read his Epistle, p. 804.

And *S. Fisher* farther, 'As to *Paul's* own swearing, though 'I will not say (as *Jer. Ives* says some say) he did evil in 'swearing, (for he sware not) yet in swearing he had done 'evil, had he sworn in those many Expressions, wherein 'H. D. and *J. Ives* assert he did swear. And *S. Fisher* denies it, as well because untrue, as because if he did, 'Then 'he had come under the guilt of Swearing commonly, ordinarily, frequently, or in his common Communication 'with the Saints; and in his Letters to them, uncalled to 'it by any Magistrate; which kind of Swearing, those two 'Sticklers



Sticklers for Oaths, in some Cases, do both confess, are by Christ condemned and forbidden. So that the Apostle's clearness was long ago asserted.

And tho' some would alledge, the Apostle did not swear in those weighty solemn Asseverations, because he us'd them in Religious Cases; but they grant then, if he had us'd them upon Civil Occasions he had sworn, let them read *Gal. 1. 19, 20, 21.* and they may see he partly treats of Civil Affairs, viz. his Journeying, and his seeing no other of the Apostles, save *James the Lord's Brother*; and yet herein he uses the Name of the Lord, saying, *Behold, before God I lie not.*

*Samuel Fisher* also, in Answer to *Bishop Gauden*, treating of these Expressions of Christ and *Paul*, saith, p. 70. 'And none of them, which (as occasion is) they are not as free to use (not as imposed by Men, tying them at their Wills to any one of them, but as moved to any one of them, as the Lord gives Utterance) as they are to use Yea and Nay it self: Yet tho' they say, *God is my Witness*, or any of the rest, they will not take it for an Oath before their Courts, but Fine and Prison, without there be a using of the fore-mention'd outward Rites.

Again, 'Thus among their Ministers at their Churches, and in their Books, *Verily, verily, God is my Witness, I call God to Record, I speak the Truth before God, and Lye not, I speak as in the Presence of God*, and such like, are Oaths and forms of Swearing; but among the Magistrates in their Courts, and at their Benches (why else are the Quakers fined, and imprisoned, and confiscated, for not Swearing, though they can use them?) those and such-like Forms of Speech, are not a Swearing.

Again, p. 91. Speaking of the Bishop's mistaking of the Quakers Principle, *S. Fisher* says, 'Let your Yea be Yea, and your Nay Nay, lest ye fall into Condemnation, must be taken in such exclusive latitude or broad way of Command; howbeit, not indeed such an odd conceited kind of Universality of Command, as the Bishop fancies, as enjoyns to use no other Words in any Communication, by way of affirming or denying, but barely and only those Syllables



' Syllables of *Yea* and *Nay*; for the *Quakers* (as very Fools  
' as the Bishop would make them) are not so silly as to affect  
' to use (as he fancies they do) those very Monosyllables,  
' as if they fancied themselves verbally tied to them.

Again, ' Neither do the *Quakers* scruple to use such Para-  
' phrases or Enlargements of Speech, as the Matter, or the  
' Party's Understanding or Diffidence, may stand in need  
' of; as, *God is Witness, We speak as in his Presence*, or the  
' like.

And *Edward Burroughs* says, page 773. ' We Renounce all  
' Foreign Authority, Power and Jurisdiction of the Pope,  
' or any else, from having any Supremacy whatsoever,  
' over the King, or any the good Subjects of *England*;  
' and this we do declare, acknowledge and testifie, in the  
' Fear and Presence of God.

Again, saith *Edw. Burroughs*, p. 774. ' We refuse to Swear  
' in this case of Allegiance to the King, and in all other  
' Cases whatsoever, and we cannot Swear at all; though  
' the Truth and Verity of all things in all Causes, so far as  
' known unto us, and as occasion requireth, we can acknow-  
' ledge and testifie with *Yea* and *Nay*, as in the Fear and  
' Presence of God, with true Intent.

Also *Thomas Ellwood*, in his Book *Truth prevailing*, p. 155.  
plainly declares, *To say barely and simply, God is my Witness,*  
*is no Oath.* See more at large in pag. 156, 157, 158, 159,  
160, &c.

Likewise *Robert Barclay*, p. 553. says, ' That the using  
' such manner of speaking are neither Oaths, nor so esteemed  
' by our Adversaries; for when upon occasion, in matters  
' of great moment, we have said, *We speak the Truth*  
' in the fear of God, and before him, who is our Witness,  
' and the Searcher of our Hearts; adding such kind of seri-  
' ous Attestations, which we never refused in matters of  
' Consequence; nevertheless an Oath hath moreover been  
' required of us, with the Ceremony of putting our Hand  
' upon the Book, and kissing it, the lifting up the Hand  
' or Fingers, together with the common Form of Impre-  
' cation, *So help me God*; or, *So truly let the Lord God Almighty*  
' *help me.* [Which Friends have generally denied.]

Again, p. 238. says *R. Barclay*, 'I do sincerely declare before God, who knows I speak the Truth, and Lye not, that I had not the least purpose to meddle with those Debates, &c.

We next recite some part of what *G. Whitehead* says, in his *Case of the Quakers concerning Oaths, defended as Evangelical, Anno 1675*, on those words, *God knows I lie not, God is my Witness*; 'How can this be (*says he*) a Solemn Oath or Swearing, when he neither intends it, nor useth the Ceremony of an Oath, nor any Imprecation or Curse.

'For there is a plain difference between a Man's earnestly Appealing to God, by way of Imprecation, as the great Judge of Heaven and Earth, Avenger of Injury and Falseness; and tenderly Resigning his Cause unto God, that he may discover the Truth (being Witness thereof) to others, when it is or may be doubted or questioned: As in a Case of Moment, wherein I know and am sure, the Truth is on my side, while others may doubt or question me; if I Appeal, Commit, or Resign my Cause to God (as knowing him to be my Witness therein) it is singly with a desire, that he may enlighten their Understandings, and bring them to know the Truth of my Cause.

Which manner of Arguing he uses in Reply to the Adversaries of Truth, that would needs have it, that those Apostolical Expressions were Oaths.

Neither was his Service in this Case only in defending Friends Principle of *Not Swearing*, but also of offering a Solemn Religious Declaration, as such, being no Oath, against the old open Opugners of Truth; but his Care and Concern hath likewise been against Apostates from the Truth ----- Who to vilifie Friends, have joined with the Spirit of the aforesaid Adversaries, in accounting those Solemn Declarations aforesaid to be Oaths; which is thus Reply'd to, in his *Reflections on a Scandalous Pamphlet*, printed or promoted by *J. P.* Says *G. Whitehead*, p. 7. 'The Remarker's Description of an Oath, reflects on the Apostle *Paul*, for Swearing, and using several Forms of Oaths, in his Epistle to the Churches of Christ, as if they were so incredulous, as not to believe his Christian Testimony, without using several Forms of Oaths;

‘ Oaths; or without breaking Christ’s Command; and his  
 ‘ Apostle *James* his Exhortation against all Swearing, *Mat. 5.*  
 ‘ *Jam. 5.* We’ll rather believe the Apostles of Christ obser-  
 ‘ ved his Doctrine, Not to Swear, than that any, contrary  
 ‘ thereunto, did Swear several Forms of Oaths; for God  
 ‘ being Witness to every Testimony of Truth, though un-  
 ‘ sworn, I cannot apprehend, that simply declaring, either  
 ‘ in the Presence of God, or that God is Witness to the  
 ‘ Truth declared, can be either an Oath, or the Form of  
 ‘ an Oath.

And in a Treatise of *William Penn’s*, called, *The great Case of Liberty of Conscience once more briefly Debated and Defended*, page 48. The Author useth a Solemn Declaration, after this manner, ‘ We take the Righteous Holy God to Record, ‘ against all Objections that are ignorantly or designedly ‘ raised against us, that we hold no Principle Destructive ‘ of the *English* Government, that we plead for no such ‘ Dissenter.

Now we tenderly desire all to consider, what difference is there between the Name of God in such a Solemn Declaration, That Friends are Innocent under the Government; and the Solemn Declaration, with the Name of God in it, whereby we promise to remain so?

Also we observe *William Penn*, in his Answer to the *Ashe-  
 nian Mercury*, mentioning the Apostle’s Words, viz. *Rom.*  
*9. 1. God is my Witness.* *2 Cor. 11. 31. God knoweth I Lye not.*  
*Gal. 1. 20. Before God I lye not.* *W. Penn denying on our part*  
*any of these said Texts to be an Oath;* and so therein concur-  
 ring with Friends former and present Judgment in the  
 Case.

So that you have a Continuation of Proofs, from Friends of great Eminency, that this hath been, without question, the Principle and Practice of Friends.

Whereby you may see, that Friends did offer their Yea and Nay, in Opposition to Swearing; and not in Opposition to Friends solemnly Declaring, in the Sight and Presence of God, and before God, and in the Fear of God.

And as Friends have sometimes in Publick express’d themselves in the Words *Yea* and *Nay*, so have they many

times express'd themselves in other Words, and offered divers Solemn Reverential Expressions, as *in the Presence of God, in his Sight, in his Fear, and God is Witness, &c.* as is very manifest, by the forecited Quotations: Yet they did never therein believe they exceeded Christ's Command, or Yea and Nay, or their own Testimony.

For farther plain Proof whereof, see Friends Paper to the Government, Intituled, *Truth seeks no Corners*, subscribed by *Ellis Hook*, the 7th of the Third Month, 1679. in the Name, and on the Behalf of the People called *Quakers*; in which is contained, a *Protestation, or Declaration, to distinguish Protestant Dissenters from Popish Recusants*, beginning thus; 'I *A. B.* do, in the Presence of Almighty God, 'Solemnly Profess, and in good Conscience declare, &c.

Which said Teste had so good Acceptance, as that it was Reprinted, with some Reasons drawn up by Friends, in which they say, lastly, 'We do here humbly offer a Declaration, [*being that before-mentioned*] and pray, that it 'may be received as a Testimony of our Good Affection 'to the Protestant Cause, and as our Assurance to live a 'sober, peaceable Life under the present Government; and 'in case any among us should be found false to our Declaration and Engagement, let such be punished as Perjured Persons.

See also another Paper printed to the Government, 1680. of like Import, which begins thus, 'I *A. B.* do Solemnly, in 'the Presence of God, and in my Conscience profess, testify 'and declare, that I do not believe the Church of *Rome*, or 'Papal Church, is the true Church, out of which there is 'no Salvation, &c.

And again, Friends say in the same Paper, 'And I do 'truly and sincerely profess, and in good Conscience declare, That I believe King *Charles* the Second is Lawful 'and Rightful King of this Realm, and all other his Dominions and Countries.

And again, in the same Paper, 'And I do Solemnly, in 'the Presence of God, testify and declare, That I make 'this Declaration, and every part thereof, in the plain and 'ordinary Sense of the Words read unto me, &c.

Which

Which said Paper was most of it Reprinted by Friends in Anno 1688. To which Friends added,

'I A. B. do promise, by the Assistance of the Grace of God, to be True and Faithful to King *William* and Queen *Mary*, &c.

And since the Government hath by Law allow'd us to Worship God in his own way, Solemnly to Promise our Fidelity, and to declare the Truth in several Cases, instead of Swearing it; which formerly could not be obtained from the several Powers, of whom 'twas desired, as in the forecited Solemn Declarations offer'd by Friends, is largely set forth :

We hope that none now will be so Uncharitable, as to conclude, we do these things, (*viz.* either Worship, Promise, or give Evidence) meerly formally, and at the Will of Man, but in good Conscience to that God, that has inclined Man to favour us in these things.

Thus, *dear Friends*, we have shewed you the Sense of our Ancient Friends,

*George Fox,*  
*Richard Farnsworth,*  
*Richard Hubberthorn,*  
*Edward Burroughs,*  
*William Smith,*  
*Isaac Penington,*  
*Francis Howgill,*  
*Samuel Fisher,*  
*Thomas Elkwood,*  
*Robert Barclay,*  
*William Penn,*  
*George Whitehead.*

Besides which, many more instances might be Collected, both out of their, and several other Friends Books, to the same effect, which for Brevity's sake is omitted.

As also that in the Yearly Meeting, 1692. where Friends of the Meeting for Sufferings, Care was desired to be continued.

nued for the Relief of Friends from the Burthen of Oaths, as the Lord did open a Way, and give Opportunity for the same; whose Care was commended, and also desired to be continued in the Yearly Meeting, 1693. as the Lord should please to make way for the general Ease of Friends.

By which, Friends, you may see that it was consistent with our Testimony to speak in the Fear, in the Sight, or in the Presence of God, who is Witness, or before God; and tho' by our aforesaid Adversaries 'twas Asserted, That these Solemn Affirmations were Oaths, that the Apostle Swore, and that Friends might Swear; yet the aforesaid Faithful Friends, severally as they were concerned, opposed them therein; and affirmed, those Solemn Affirmations are no Oaths; that the Apostle did not Swear in using such Expressions; and that Friends might Reverently use such Expressions without Swearing; both when we promise to be True and Faithful to the Government, and in other Civil Affairs, when Lawfully called thereto.

And dear Friends, how sweet will it be, to have Truth sincerely declared before Magistrates, in the Presence of Almighty God, who is Witness of the Truth of what Friends say, as they speak in his Holy Dread and Fear! In this therefore our Desire is you may all be found.

That whensoever any of you shall be called thereto, you may speak in the Sense thereof, so as to Convince the World, that Gospel Witness-bearing, doth exceed Legal Swearing.

Oh, let all now be thankful, that the Lord hath so tender'd the Hearts of many in Authority; and the good Part hath so prevailed in them, as to subject their Wills, so far to Friends Entreaties; and in some measure grant us now by Law, what Friends have offered to other Governments, and could never be accepted.

Let none therefore count or call this a subjecting our Testimony to the Will of Man, seeing God hath so far subjected Man's Will to our Christian Desire.

And

And none need question, but as they abide in the Fear of the Lord, they will be preserved sensible of his Presence; and so not be found in a Form of Godliness, without the Life.

Whenever Friends formerly offer'd to speak in the Presence of God, Friends did not doubt but they should be free and capable so to speak, if that Government had accepted their said Offer.

And seeing 'tis now granted by the Government, we hope none will distrust the Lord's Assistance therein, now, any more than formerly, or any more than in waiting upon him in Meetings, since it has been permitted by Men so to do.

*Signed in behalf of the Meeting for Sufferings in:  
London, the 1st of the 3d Month, 1696. By*

Benjamin Bealing;

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T H E E N D.